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THE CHOICE OF ACHILLES

AND OTHER POEMS

A. G. BUTLER

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The Choice of Achilles

and other poems

Oxford
HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

THE CHOICE OF ACHILLES

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ARTHUR GRAY BUTLER

London
HENRY FROWDE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE, AMEN CORNER, E.C.
NEW YORK: 91 & 93 FIFTH AVENUE
1900

11-5-21
8/6/11

PR
4349
B56C55

PREFACE

Some of the poems in this volume have appeared in the *Spectator*, others in the *Oxford Magazine*, and are now reproduced by the kind permission of the Editors.

I should also add that a few of the poems have been already published by me, and these are marked with an asterisk, in the Table of Contents.

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THE CHOICE OF ACHILLES

Γνώσεται ὡς δὴ δηρὸν ἐγὼ πολέμοιο πέπαυμαι.

In the crisp clearness of a summer morn,
Perplexed at heart and angry with himself,
Tossing the pebbles on the sea-beach, lay
Achilles, young Achilles, Peleus' heir;
Peleus, whom in his pride of earlier charms
(So Fate decreed, and sovereign Zeus fulfilled),
Fair Thetis wedded: happier had she kept
Her Ocean-state, and on some windy morn,
When all the caves were filled with murmuring sound,
There hearkened as some jolly Triton wooed,
And known with less of rapture less of woe,
Than thus have stooped, losing for mortal joys
Immortal calm! For from that dear embrace
By sea-nymphs sung of, while in music low
Old Ocean played with Zephyr on the shore,
Was born the great Achilles, first of men;
Who now, none save Patroclus watching by,
His friend, most fair of all his race and time,
Favoured to share a hero's greater soul,
Thus spake, half-loud, half-inly to himself.

'Long life and ease, or glory and the grave,
Still in my prime! Oh! for an oracle
To sound above these tortures of the mind,
And strike their brawling silent! Never yet
Since deepening manhood darkened first these lips,
Bringing the larger choices of the soul,
I doubted so before. Or better were it,
Being so called by countrymen and friends,
The eyes of Greece and Asia looking on
As on a stage, to rise, to arm, to go
With Godlike men, and on the plains of Troy
Do battle for another's scath and wrong?
Or to stay here, here honoured, here beloved,
A little land's sole greatness? What to me
Is Helen? What Atrides? Or the wrong
Done to the hospitable board? Avenge,
Zeus, thine own wrongs! Nay, were she all in one,
White as the blossom on an April thorn;
Chaste Artemis, with Pallas' wisdom crowned
On Aphrodite's bloom; the perfect flower,
Not as she is the weed of womankind;
Still, were she worth this stir? Ye Gods, I chafe
That we, with weightier quarrels of our own,
Old feuds unstanched, proud vassals ill-subdued,
Life's sweet, strange thirst unslaked, unsatisfied,
Should natheless for a woman's lightness bleed,
And all too soon end all. Yet am I called,
The eyes of Greece and Asia looking on,
Watching me choose. Upon Achilles' choice
The world hangs mute; as waits the reaper-band
Till one, the foremost reaper, stooping down
Puts in the sickle, and the toil begins,

The toil that reaps the life-blood of the year.
So—yet who calls me? Agamemnon! He—
The Mycenaean, me the Goddess-born,—
Call me to die! to die, and at Hell-gate,
Unbodied, ask for my distracted shade
Rest in the death-god's gloom! Achilles' shade
No better than a fume! Oh, I have heard
From old men cowering by a wintry fire,
Tales of such horror from that underworld
As froze the curdling blood, and bid the eyes
Start from their sockets, while the awestruck hall
Shuddered with fleshless phantoms. Better were it
Living, to serve a slave, earth's meanest thrall,
Fed with the dogs, and couching with the worm,
Than reign below, a shadowy king of shades,
Lord of the unstirred silence. O my friend,
Heart of my heart, thou dearer, trustier soul,
In whose clear eyes I glass, I see myself,
What sayst thou, loved Patroclus? Shall we bide
Here in old Phthia, wedded, with fair wives
Crowned with fair offspring; while, with woodland horn,
With Satyr and with Faun, a jovial crew,
We drive the dappled darlings down the wood
Through echoing glades, to where in Tempe's vale
Peneus wanders? joyous, with the heart
Of boyhood in the larger heart of man,
Like laughing rills in rivers wandering free?
Or—come, thy counsel? What? Oh, it jarred mine ear—
"Hector will triumph if I am not there,
And Greece lament her bravest son away."
Hector! He first, he chief of all this time!
He as a demigod before high Troy

To stalk untamed, and mock us Grecian girls,
In presence of old Priam and his peers!
Hector, he Honour's minion, who the while
With all her flattering voices shouts no name
Save only Hector! O my Myrmidons,
My matchless, brave, unconquered Myrmidons,
And we not there to curb him! Let me go!
Long life and ease, or glory and the grave?
What life is that which smoulders, wasting on,
Like Autumn's sullen fire in sodden leaves,
Nor dark nor bright, its splendour never lit,
So ne'er to be extinguished? Or what ease,
Ease as of swine that in the food-trough sleep,
When they have swilled the garbage? This for me,
Whose meat is glory, and who cannot sleep
For fame of Hector! What to me is life
Barren of fame? The grey-head unrenowned
Dies young at last; the hero, his one deed
Crowned with fresh fame, whose first strong flutter shows
An eagle-wing to follow, he has lived,
(Lived like the glorious Child, who, barely born,
Prodigious strangled Hera's serpent-brood,)
More truly judged by one great deed well done
Than thousand acts of measured littleness:
And so he makes an end; then, at his best,
A splendid firstfruit all undimmed by time,
He dies and the Gods take him. Such a lot,
So rich, be mine! Or wouldst thou match with this
The obscure life, the slow-stagnating years,
The patrimony of dullness handed down,
To son from sire? Wouldst call it life to live
Fat stolid fathers of a stolid race,

Full-fed, slow-witted, seated in the vines,
Who drink dull nectar, drink, and hear old tales
Of combats, deeds heroic, death in arms,
(Whose music, like the Sirens, makes me mad)
Calm and unpassioned, with a brow the while
Smooth as a sleeping infant's! Oh, these men!
These babblers with their "murrain in the flock,"
These dotards with their "mildew in the corn,"
Swarming like carrion flies on each foul wind,
Who yet do rule this world! Tush, let them be!
Each to his work! The earthworm to its earth!
The cart-horse to the gravel and the pit!
The racer to Olympia and the goal!
They have their task. Mine is to build a name
To shine like Heracles, and mount the stars,
Beyond all hope, all envy, all desire,
Whose short-lived splendour shall outlast the world.

* * * * * *

Yet Peleus weeps and bids me not to go,
And Thetis with her tears entreats me stay.
Can I deny a mother? Mother, thou?
With thy rare comings, sudden vanishings,
Breath of a wind that whispers and is sped,
Wave of the sea whose kisses lapse in foam?
No mother mine! I am the son of Greece!
And Greece with loud-voiced summons bids me forth,
Her strength, her beauty, with her soul of fire,
To ravish Troy, and pluck this Asian flower,
The world-famed Hector. Equal brook I none:
Equal? What equal for the unequal born?
Rival? I own no rival save the dead.
And yet, O mother, goddess, if thy son,

Thy very son, why hast thou shaped me thus,
Such might of sinew in the brawny limb,
Such thirst of glory in the glowing soul,
Which, as the iron reddens cliff and scar,
In every crag and cranny cries for use,
And will not be kept backward? Not for me
Tranquillity and ease, the life of Gods
Seated in clouds; above our mortal ways
Listlessly calm! for me the life of men,
Strife, arms, war, tumults, there 'mid clashing shields
To trample down the battle, till I stand
Alone with glory and the encrimsoned dead,
Acknowledged first, world-greatest! Then at last,
Come when thou wilt, Achilles' only peer,
Death, I have lived not vainly. Let us go!
Come, my Patroclus! Comrades, tried in arms,
Who love me, come! They cannot conquer Troy,
Not Ajax, not Ulysses, nor the king,
The little-great Atrides, king of men,
They cannot tear from Troy one battlement,
Reft of Achilles and his Myrmidons.
Come then! Who is for life, let him live here!
Who is for death and glory, let him go,
And mount to heaven, and add a star to fame,
Not setting like the sea-washed Pleiades;
Quick to the port! Across the crisping waves
Our prows point seaward, point the Asian shore:
Achilles wakes, is on his way to Troy.
Hector, I come.'

He said, and at the word,
In haste as one who had delayed too long,
Started to go. Ocean with all his deeps

Wept round him; Earth in many a cavern moaned;
And all the wood-nymphs sighing in the wood,
And all the sea-nymphs sighing on the shore,
Wept for the great Achilles, marked to fall,
The splendid, great Achilles. So they wept;
But mid their weeping, as soft things grow hard
When hardly trodden, arose a mother's cry,
Far-echoing, all-outpiercing. As an erne,
Whose nest is on the mountains, home returns
To find it harried, and her young ones gone;
Ravished to make the plumelet of a king
In some barbarian court of Macedon;
While a rare bloodstain on a murderous stone
Alone betrays the spoiler: and her cry
Thrills up to Heaven, and strikes the ear of Zeus,
Who hears, but no man knoweth what his mind;
He makes no sign: so shrilly rose the wail;
And, hollow as the winds that shake dark groves
Of Pelion, murmurs from the misty deep
Rang in men's ears with lamentable dirge,
Weeping the grand Achilles, first of men:
But Thetis' cry was saddest cry of all.

THE CHOICE OF HERACLES[1]

Bright flows the fountain in the Muses' grove,
High up the thymy slopes of Helicon,
And wantons with the sunbeams all day long;
Golden by day; anon the rising moon
Turns it to silver. There upon a lawn
Of oldest sward, embower'd in ancient trees,
Pine, oak, and lentisk, fragrant with the scent
Of undercreeping myrtle, hid it springs:
Yet not so hid but that the valley's sounds
Steal softly to the ear: nor so shut in,
But that intrude sweet glimpses of the plain
In light, in shadow, flickering far away
From Thebes to grey-dark Parnes. Sweet the place,
Sweet the calm airs that here take sanctuary,
Sweetest of all, delicious to the sense
Of drowsy ears, the ever-murmuring sound
Of cool, bright waters in their marble cell
That rise and fall melodious. So it chanced,
Once on a time when happy birds in spring
Pair, and the merry hours lead on to May,

[1] These lines are based on the well-known passage in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, lib. ii. ch. 1.

Came hither, troubled, envying the dead,
By Hera's wrath predestined son of toil,
Alcmena's mighty son, great Heracles.
'Hail, liquid fount! Hail, holy, heavenly spring!
Best solace of the weary when they weep!
Best comfort of the mourners when they mourn!
Soother and friend to minds perplexed and sore,
Comfort, and be my solace, or I die.'
He said, and with a sigh that all around
Set echo sighing, flat upon the sward
Fell all his length, huge, monstrous, like a rock
Loosed by an earthquake from a precipice,
That headlong in the valley falls, and grows
Matted with weeds; so dark, so huge, so strange,
O'ershadowed with his hair, lay Heracles.

Then as he lay, behold, 'twixt oak and pine,
Where flamed the crocus ruddiest on the grass,
Two maidens entered—sisters they seemed at first,
Twins of one race, twins too in face and form,
Likest in all things; but, oh! nearer viewed,
How different! Each line of beauty marred
Seemed to a naughty wildness wandered, fallen:
So, once the charm of modest virtue flown,
All others follow. One in white appeared,
With modest mien, and eyes that sought the ground,
Bent as a lily washed with rain. She moved
Decorous: grace her motion, grace her rest
Crowned, and her beauty, little prized at first,
Being so pure, so pale, so passionless,
With nought of sense to allure the sensual eye
Stole on the spirit, as steals the evening star

From the clear twilight heaven, serene and calm,
While lovers gaze and worship; such her face,
Perfect, yet as a strain most prized, most heard,
Ever with something lovely, something new,
Unfathomable beauty, deep in deep
Disclosing to the diver pearl on pearl,
A thousand pearls, each loveliest; so she stood;
And, as he gazed, he murmured, 'Come not near!
Too fair! I am not worthy.' Not so she,
That other, flushed as some bold Bacchanal
With fire of wine, one gleaming shoulder bare,
Her gossamer robe about her lightly flung,
As with a burning glance she floated on
Languid and lovely, like one keeping time
To breathings of soft Lydian dulcimers,
Fluttering the air at noontide. Lip, eye, all
Confessed her wanton, while with mincing gait,
Admiring oft her image in the pool,
Or smiling at her shadow on the grass,
Or peeping round to see if some one gazed,
With flattering mien she stooped to Heracles,
And cried, 'Why lonely thus, Alcmena's son?
What brings thee here, unhappy, thou whose groans
Have saddened earth? Oh, I have wept more tears
Than mothers sorrowing o'er their firstborn slain
To see thee, made for mightiest, like a God,
Condemned, a giant galley-slave, to serve,
The loftiest to the meanest.
"Heracles!"
—Hark, 'tis the elder-born Eurystheus calls,—
"Ho, Heracles! a laver for our hands!
The swine are in our vineyard, Heracles!"

As to an oaf, a boor: and all the streets,
Children and all, with mimic idiot scorn
Dogging thy steps, hoot, "Heracles!" as they
Would flout a drunkard.'

Up he rose in wrath,
And gathering up his club in both his hands,
Smote on the ground, rocks, herbs, o'ershadowing trees,
Calling them all Eurystheus, till he fell:
Then crying out, 'Thine object, Temptress, say,
Or say no more!' lay silent. 'Follow me,'—
She whispered, and a burning finger laid
On his great shoulder,—'Follow where she waits,
The fair Aspasia. Lycon vainly sues,
And calls her cold. Her heart is far away,
Following a dream; she dreams of Heracles.'
She said and paused: her artful serpent eyes
Of glittering coldness narrowed to a point
Of light, intensely burning, though it froze,
Watched him, her prey. He stirred not, but his club
Slid from his grasp: then she, 'Long hast thou trod
The milky ways of virtue, so miscalled;
What art thou better? Others cull the fruit
Thou shouldst have gathered, loved while thou art scorned,
And pluck the willing vintage all unblamed:
Thou, only thou art frozen. Oh, but come!
Aspasia waits. Shall Lycon win her? Nay!
Her bower is dressed and ready. In the midst
A fountain leaps: o'erarched the roses twine
In fragrant clusters, arch to let in thee.
Come, all things call thee. Hark! I hear her sigh:
Love waits for no man, but she waits for thee.'

So she soul-tempting; and I marked the flush
Burn on his cheek; and, as an adder charmed
With flute or viol, loosed his languid limbs,
He lay full length, while from his shoulder fell,
From the Nemean monster torn, his spoil
That marked him, careless as a garland worn,
His lion-skin: and she had conquered then,
With her fell arts working him to her will,
And Greece had lost a son,—oh, such a son!
Who lives, may call him fellow? But then arose
That other, not now meek with downcast mien,
But flashing scorn, her radiant throat and brow
Snow-white, with roseate anger all suffused,
And crying, 'Hence, Apostate! wretch abhorred,
Lover of ill!' superior she began,
'If after honeyed lies thou still hast taste
For bitter truth; if ever thou hast known
Of strength controlled the glory and the power,
Fair above all things earthly: then give ear.
Great son of a great sire, I court thee not
With lure of sensual service: he that seeks
My crown, must sweat; and, who would win it, bleed;
Nor hope the wreath immortal free of thorns;
Greatest, to greatest task! Such is our law.
Yet, shame that man, being the thing he is,
Sole creature upward gazing, starry-eyed
Tracking the stars of heaven,—that he should stoop,
And grovelling lay his glory prone in dust,
Level with low-eyed brutes, worse being man!'
So spake the Goddess eloquent: but he
From off the ground lifted his head amazed,

And shaking back his lion-locks, as one
Who would have spoken, but that passion strong,
Choked in its narrow-throated torrent-gorge,
Held him from words. Unheeding she went on:
'Methinks I see thee now an agèd man
Old ere thy prime; thy boasted sinews shrunk
To childhood's weakness, once in childhood strong
To strangle serpents: while, in life's last gloom,
Dark-visaged Furies troop, and gather round,
To claim thee victim, greatest son of Zeus,
Whom Zeus himself, though pitying, cannot save.

'Spare me!' he cried. Remorseless she went on,
'Nay, terrible just doom! yet worse remains.
Thy name, whereby men live when they are dead,
In song of feast or shout of battle heard,
The pride of Hellas, terror of her foes,
Blasting the ear that hears it, this shall live,
Thy nobler part linked to ignoble shame,
Who, made for best and loftiest, didst become
Willingly worst.'

But then the man arose,
Stung to the heart, and pale as one who hears
His sentence, yet, compelled to own it just,
Looks back and sees the man he might have been.
Then she more mildly: 'O with such a life
Compare that other, strong, self-balanced, whole,
Moving as great Alpheus, king of floods,
Letting no backward eddy stay his course,
So swift, his arrowy swiftness seems to stand,

All to one goal! resistless in the strength
Of undivided purpose, which who has
Conquers the world. Who conquers first himself
Triumphs o'er all. O glorious, thou the flower
Of athletes, thou Olympia's wonder, hailed
The proud palaestra's darling, if thou stand
On virtue's side, who will dare mock its cause?
Who will deride, such champion threatening near?
Go then, not murmuring! Strength must bear its load,
As Atlas on his shoulders heaves the world,
Meet task for thews Titanic. Oh! such life,
So high, yet as Prometheus quitting all,
Love, height, light, gladness, power celestial, all,
To bring down sunshine to the hearts of men,
Yet seek not guerdon; that were likest Gods
Who bless, nor ask requital.'

So his heart
Thus nobly wooed, with mighty transport filled,
Knew its own nobleness, and put forth strength,
Like oaks in old Dodona, seat of Gods,
When mounts the sap in springtime, budding leaves;
But then, till now of victory still secure,
The Temptress, who with flowers upon the grass
Was toying, rose, and, loth to lose her prey,
As one in thought, half-musing, half in scorn,
Murmured 'Eurystheus.'

Dark he grew again,
As gleam and gloom alternate o'er wild seas
Chase one another, and vexed mariners
Pray on the shore, while Athos broods aloft
Far threatening storm. But then, all sternness gone,
With eyes that looked all language, all one voice

Breathing compassion, yearning through her tears,
As on dry pastures showers the gentle rain,
Her sister, as a mother o'er her son,
Thus pitying spake.

'To quarrel with our fate
Is idle; not the Gods can conquer Fate;
To bear it, heavenly. For in this low world
Where, as in dreams, all things perversely run,
The noblest oft are crowned but in the tomb,
And weaklings trample heroes. Yet, for all,
They still are weaklings; nature is not changed;
Lions are lions, foxes foxes still,
And oft the ignoble head that wears a crown
Bends inwardly abashed to some poor churl,
That has no wealth save virtue, yet his rags,
Nobler than purple, hide a royal soul.
Then go thou forth to do, to dare, to endure,
Patient to bow thyself to Heaven's high will,
And teach obedience. Go, thou greatest, toil,
As others for themselves, so thou for all!
And yet if Virtue, tasteless seen afar,
With close ripe pleasure all unequal strive,
If the near grape outvie the distant wine,
Look up and see, Zeus is his witness still.'

She said, and lo! in heaven a sound of wings
Far-rushing, Zeus' great eagle, in its gripe
A serpent borne, rapt from Cephissus' fen,
There sleeping; now awaked, it writhed, it strove,
Spurted dark venom on the darkening air,
Doubtful long time the victory; but at length,
To anger moved, the nobler creature struck

With beak, wing, talon, all combined, one blow,
And slew its adversary: conqueror now
Awhile it paused, then, as a fire aloft,
Victorious soared, and vanished in the blue.

He saw, and knew the sign by his great Sire
Sent from above: then on the Temptress turned
His slow, broad back, who slunk away ashamed;
She paled, she shrivelled up in that just scorn,
Haggard, her beauty gone, lean, old and vile;
Round her the grasses withered as she passed.

Then to that other kneeling, 'I am thine,'
He cried, 'Be life though weary, yet not long:
I will with suffering fill it to the close.'
But she: 'Not long the suffering, and the fame
Eternal:' then upon her Hero smiled,
Covering a tear, and smiling went her way.

Then forth he fared, calm and resolved, not loud
In vaunting, nor with fire of self-applause
Deceitful stirred; but silent, steadfast, calm,
Knowing his old self dead, yet of the new
Not certain, more in ignorance than in fear:
As when a minstrel takes a harp new strung,
And strikes the strings with trembling, lest they make
Discordant music, but he finds them true:
And then henceforth upon the ears of men
Grows a new strain, melodious, liquid, pure,
Sweet, ordered, heavenly, Nature's hymn of praise,
Like that which kindled first the Orphean lyre;
And still that song, when ended, yet lives on

Hid in men's souls, and, buried for a while,
Wells forth anon in music, in some spring,
Maytime of hearts; and, as a call divine,
It wakes a singer here, a singer there,
Till earth is filled with singing: and the spheres
Listen above: ('twas thence the wonder came
To heal our jars;) and from concordant throats
Swells up one strain of faultless harmony.

THE QUEEN

WERE she but one of us, none would be dearer;
Were she our lowliest, all would revere her;
Gracious, and kindly, and blamelessly moving
In her simplicity thoughtful and loving.
But on a throne that is widest and oldest,
Ruling a race that is fiercest and boldest;
Hands that lack tenderness, hearts that need lifting,
Wanting a polestar, a standard unshifting,
Something to steer by; to eyes that are holden
Pointing a treasure not earthy, not golden;
Thank we now God for her! God the All-giver!
Lift we our praise for her! While as a river
Thousand-waved, thousand-tongued, flow the glad voices
Where, all one heart and soul, England rejoices;
While, races and kindreds, whom seas cannot sever,
We gather around her, Queen honoured for ever.

1897.

SINCE IT MUST BE

'They have not seen the bottom of old England yet.'
LORD ROSEBERY.

THERE's a stirring of the country such as never was before,
Like the heaving of an earthquake, a volcano at the core:
They may tell us we are sinking, that our sun is nearly set,
But they haven't seen the bottom of the old country yet.

They are passing from the palace, they are speeding from the plough;
Time no more is Past and Future, it is one tremendous Now!
Many a heart is touched with sadness, many an eye with sorrow wet,
But they give their best and dearest for the old country yet.

All the springs of love are flowing for the Queen and for the throne;
All the pride innate in freemen that their country is their own;

Overseas our sons are hastening to repay the children's debt:
Oh, the fullness of the young life in the old country yet!

There's a loosening now of purse-strings that were held too tight of old,
There's a feeling after better things than commerce or than gold:
Ancient faults rise up against us, but away with vain regret,
Only courage, courage, courage, for the old country yet!

We have had our dark Corunnas, and we've had our Waterloo:
As our fathers once saved Europe, so we'll save our brethren too:
Memory, peace with sad repinings; one thing only not forget,
That we haven't done our utmost for the old country yet!

So we'll swear it all together, as an oath with power to bind,
'Perish party, perish faction, perish littleness of mind!'
Leave to foes to say we're sinking, that our sun is nearly set!
No! they haven't seen the bottom of the old country yet.

February, 1900.

SONNETS

EMPIRE

As men who shrink from high and hardy pains
  Already take the downward easy curve,
  And find, too late, they have what they deserve;
'With love of greatness, love of virtue wanes';
Ill fares the land that reckons loss and gains
  Too narrowly. We must not shrink or swerve
  Because the height is greater than our nerve;
Or seek with safer courses smoother plains,
Inglorious. Far better, far to be
  One of the brave who climb, and look not back,
  Who choose the upward path, the bleeding track,
Than one who, floating on a soft blue sea,
  Steers for the Siren-isle, the shelter warm,
  Pilot of ease, not comrade of the storm.

'HE PURGETH IT'

Nations need sometime purging. When our mood
Is soft, emasculate, and fearing pain;
When indolence and torpor chill the blood,
And insolence and bluster fire the brain;
When, puny sons of mighty sires, we deem
Our fathers' stature greater than our own,
We cannot wear their armour, and we dream
Heroic dreams, the life heroic flown:
Then oh! come loss, come suffering—only shame
Be absent! Come, and to our souls discover,
Ere the reluctant day of grace be over,
Lost manhood's greatness, now inert and tame;
Virtue's foundation strong is to be bold;
The nobler metal iron is, not gold.

SWEET SORROW

Who hath not loved her who hath ever tried her?
Who doth not owe her more of joy than tears?
Who doth not grudge the hours he hath denied her,
The careless hours, the laughter-loving years?
Who doth not know his life more worth the living,
Now she hath blessed it; now her teacher, Pain,
Hath purged his vision, and with gracious giving
Restored it cleansed to purer life again?
Sorrow, sweet Sorrow! Now at length 'tis over,
The storm, the fret, the fever! And 'tis well,
Well, if within we can our good discover
In peace; we thought it once in strife to dwell,
In storm, in fret, in fever. But 'tis past:
The battered swimmer finds his shore at last.

PORTIA

Woo me not, love, with words! They are too sweet,
  And sweetness sickens soon, and blooms to die.
Woo me with noble deeds, that is more meet,
  With valiant truth, and spotless chivalry!
Be constant, daring, bold! Then at thy feet,
  Not thou at mine, it shall be mine to lie,
And in love's worship, and self-chosen seat,
  Look up and learn earth's true nobility.
Fain would I hold thee prisoner, but not now;
  Love pants for love, but 'tis not yet the day;
Roses to strew my path thou once didst vow;
  Better for both life's instant thorny way!
There, where the pibrochs skirl, the trumpets blow,
Though death await thee, Go! I bid thee go.

ANTONIO

In youth, when idle hearts to love inclined
  Flit on from flower to flower, love passed me by:
This one the senses charmed, but not the mind;
  That one the judgement pleased, but not the eye.
So, seeming inward cold and outward blind,
  I lived, love's baffled votary. Swift would fly
The dream I clasped at; till I left behind
  Fair youth, and thought, sweet love unfound, to die.
But now when love has found me, 'tis too late:
  As stars at dawn love yields to nobler fire:
Lo, honour calls, the summoner of fate:
  Dead in its ashes lies extinct desire.
Sound trumpets, sound! Blow bugles' maddening breath!
Child, we have loved too late. Farewell! my bride is Death.

TO CECIL RHODES

('Wherever our flag goes in Africa it means the substitution of peace, industry, and freedom, for war, militarism, and slavery.'—*Speech of Mr. C. Rhodes.*)

Deep-voiced, broad-fronted, with the Caesar's brow,
A dreamer with a diamond in his hand
Musing on Empire! Once I saw him stand,
His crescent-star yet rising; risen now,
'Neath its full orb the sad, dark races bow
From Capricorn to Cancer. Lo! that sand
Drifting before invisible command—
Like it, his labour-legions northward flow,
Gold in their hearts. Death lurks in flower and tree;
Death in the flood, and fen, and swooning airs
Sickening with sweetness; yet, unfaltering, he,
While at his touch the slave-king disappears,
Hails Africa at peace from sea to sea,
Dried up the source of slavery's ancient tears.

GREATER ENGLAND

The little Englander is dead and gone:
  There lives a greater England far away,
  Behind the rising of the Eastern day,
Beyond the setting of the Western Sun.
Hark to its voice! 'tis speaking; still that one
  Dear language! still our ancient woods and streams
  Lisp on their lips, and murmur in their dreams:
They have their Thames, an Avon of their own;
Snowdon is theirs, and Arden. Oh! that scroll
Of memory, keep it, clasp it to your soul,
Ye fresh young worlds! On us the shadows fall;
  We are of evening; but, O Englands new,
What pride in you our glory to recall,
  The gleam of sunrise, and the morning-dew!

'SAVING THE COLOURS'

WHAT? Saved the Colours! He, that whitefaced boy,
Fresh from his Eton, fresh from sports and noise,
Chattering of Dame and Tutor! Yet he now,
When England's honour stood on that cold edge
Shivering, and pale, this black November morn,
Stood fast, and saved her banner. Go! I am sped;
Let my blood flow! But he, that gallant lad,
Tottering and bloodless there, wi' his sword's fell point
Tracing in dust unconscious characters,
Mother's name, sister's, one yet dearer still,
Let him not die! Bind up his wounds! The race,
Sea-kings and all, Crusaders, Cavaliers,
From which he sprang, Sir Rolf, Sir Hildebrand,
Valiant Sir Hugh, too seldom died i' their beds;
Save him, their last boy-hero!
Hail him now!
Honour from all, general to drummer-boy,
Swords at salute! Bonnets on bayonets!
Voices of admiration tipped with fire!
And shout, shout, shout, from this grand Inkerman,
Till it reverberate on to Britain's shores,
Telling, he saved the Colours! Brave old rag,
Tossed like to crimson foam on the darkened waves,

In that last volley torn thy triple cross
Went like a lutestring. Yet he bore it on,
He saved the Colours! Take my last salute!
Boy, I salute thee too: my grizzled age
Bends to thy beardless youth. Now my eyes swim.
Death! What is death that tames a soldier's pride?
Oh, that dear England! In her mists afar,
Dearer than life, than love, than all we know,
Thus we die for her. Land of hearts, farewell!

(From a well-known picture by Robert Gibb, R.S.A.)

NANSEN

So you are back with us, Fridtjof Nansen!
Back from the clutch of the nightlong winter;
Back to the roar of the restless market:
Back to the jars of the wrangling senate;
Back to the frivolous empty voices;
And thou art one of us, kith of us, kin of us;
Welcome to Oxford, grand old Norseman!

What hast thou done there? Lived! 'Tis something;
Lived, where no other but man could prosper,
On the great sea-river that bare thee northward;
Alone with famine, and death, and winter;
Alone with phantoms of fear and madness;
Till a voice cried, Go! And the night, thy jailer,
Lifting its bar, as a roselight flushing,
Shone in the east: and the ice-floe trembled,
Waked with its horrible ghastly noises,
Like a guilty city, surprised by morning:
Then forth, with carols of home and Norway,
Forth didst thou travel, a Jotun giant,
Rejoicing, glorious, self-reliant,
Skeying to Northward, Northward, Northward,
Oh, for a grip of thee, grand old Norseman!

What hast thou more done? Done? Our greatest
Not do, but are; and their best is, being.

Visible things are great, gigantic,
But the invisible far, far greater!
To lift the record, and plant it farther;
To lead the van, and the mass to kindle;
To stir and ruffle a stagnant water.
And thou hast done it, hast marked an era,
A little farther, a little nearer
The goal of travel; and brought returning
The fair white flower of noble venture,
Plucked on an icefield farthest northward,
Truth's bloodless laurel, a wreath for Norway.
So from the deathworld foiled, yet victor,
Thou hast come back to us, grand old Norseman.

Ask not the use of it, Oxford! England!
Small is the fear of abuse of it, England!
While there are pearls in the deep yet hiding,
Gold in the rocks or the river abiding;
While each height won yet discloses a higher,
While each feat done bids us farther aspire;
With the pride of the race, its best manhood's endeavour,
Ere the night come and swallow us, closing for ever;
Still shall the heart with the old flame burning
Look over the waves with the sea-king's yearning;
On to the vision and hope of ages,
The dream and promise of seer and sages;
Heroes leading us, heroes leaving us,
Out of the darkness into the darkness,
So we go onward, onward, onward,
We are akin to thee, grand old Norseman.

THE COMING O' THE GREEN

Now the spirit of the flood is awake,
And the spirit of the wood is stirred,
And the spirit of the air is beautiful and fair,
And so is the song of the bird.

And there cometh a whisper of Spring,
And its footfall is light on the sea,
And it cometh from the south, with a jewel in its mouth,
And it bringeth a blessing to me.

And the bare bough is rustling with leaves,
And the dark earth is glistening with gold,
And the land is all sheen with the coming o' the green,
And a new world is born of the old.

And it is not the work of a man
Who plieth his task here and there;
Not in single bud and flower, but in universal power,
It cometh, mighty spirit, everywhere.

And the hawthorn is snowy in the brake,
And the dear lark is singing up on high,
And the young things are sprouting, the young children shouting,
And the old tears awake in the eye.

For earth was a paradise once,
And life all a jubilee then,
But the glory once seen in the coming o' the green
Departs when we come to be men.

For sweet is the lily in the bed,
And sweet is the flower on the wall,
But sweeter the tear, and the pity of the dead,
For the old things were sweetest of all.

THE MOMENT OF THE YEAR

Spring, and a softer light
  On flood and field! in birds a mellower tone!
A growing of delight
  Far sweeter than delight itself full-grown!

Spring, and a lovelier hue
  Of tender green, that in the sun looks gold!
Nothing that is not new,
  Nothing that will not spoil becoming old!

Oh, then, as thou art, Spring,
  There stay! Too lavish beauty doth but cloy:
Pleased with a little thing
  I would not spend at once my all of joy.

Fly not! So! Not too fast!
  There is more rapture in an April day,
That's sometime overcast,
  Than all the azure of unclouded May.

Oh, rare, that birchen leaf
  Shot through with light, with fragrance in each fold!
That is enough. Belief
  Is more than sight: eyes sated are so cold.

And there, that colour fine!
  That first suggestion of mysterious power
Is lovelier, more divine
  Than all the glories of the expanded flower;

Than chestnuts' myriad bloom,
  Than the rich almond, and the milk-white pear,
And all the proud perfume
  Flung by hot roses on the sunburnt air.

Ah, Spring, whose presence calls
  Old times, old faces back to memory,
Even crumbling College-walls
  Smile, and are young again retouched by thee.

Yet, whether they be tears
  That dim these eyes I know not, but I know
That for those perished years
  I would give all, thrice all, that I am now.

Therefore, I prythee, stay!
  Cloud not young pleasure with a single tear!
If hours bring but decay,
  Let us enjoy this moment of the year.

THE MERRY MONTH

It was the merry month,
  And the merry birds sang loud;
The wren was in the ivy-bush,
  The lark was in the cloud.
In all that day of perfect May
  There seemed no power of ill,
When a hawk came sailing out of the wood,
  And all those songs grew still.

It was the merry month,
  And the woods were full of glee,
The lizard on its sunny bank,
  The squirrel upon the tree.
In all that time of lusty prime
  There seemed no thought of death,
When a snake came crawling out of a nook,
  And fear held every breath.

It was the merry month,
  And never was month more fair:
Lord Lovel is up in his lady's bower
  Singing with Lady Clare.
They sang it once, they sang it twice,
  That song; he seemed true lover:
When a stinging word like a blow was heard,—
  Their merry month was over.

IN ARCADY

Not a movement, not a murmur in the wind,
  Not a bird-note, not a whisper in the air,
Not a fancy, not a feeling in the mind
  But the one thought, 'It is very, very fair.'

And the perfume, what a perfume of the pine!
  And the azure, what an azure, there below!
Where the waters in a long and creamy line
  Come in wavelets! See, the Ocean hath its snow.

Oh! the beauty of the downward-dropping rills,
  As they fall, or seem to fall, without a sound!
The enchantment, old enchantment of the hills,
  With the mystery of silence all around!

As if Spirits of the mountain and the deep,
  Fancy's loveliest creations, all were there,
Who might wake up any moment from their sleep,
  Nymph and Naiad, beauty's semblance, yet more fair:

Something dearer than the stillness of the wood;
  Something lovelier than the radiance of the green;
Which might teach us, in a voice we understood,
  That a heart is there in nature, though unseen:

That a mother's heart is beating in her grace;
  She hath wisdom, she is wonderfully wise;
There is purpose in each wrinkle of her cheek;
  Love is lurking in the glances of her eyes.

And the wildness has departed from her life;
  Peace is shining in her battlefields of old;
Here the mountain tells of earthquake and of strife;
  There the valley hath its cornfields, and its gold.

So we lingered, till the landscape seemed to blend
  With the golden haze of sunset far away:
And we knew not the beginning from the end;
  All was passing with the passing of the day.

All was passing, yet it cometh oft again
  In the evening, like a well-belovèd guest,
That remembrance of a beauty without stain,
  Of a world just for a moment at its best.

Not a movement, not a murmur in the wind!
  Not a bird-note, not a whisper in the air!
But engraven, deep-engraven, on the mind
  Still I see it. Ah, 'twas very, very fair.

NONDUM

Love seeks not honour, pride, or pelf;
Love is too happy in itself;
All earth's delights its glories are,
And love is lord of the evening star.

Love is not happy; love is poor;
Love vainly woos a closèd door;
While larks do rise, and crickets sing,
Love moping sits with folded wing.

Uncertain love, with nought thine own,
Rich on a smile, poor on a frown!
If of such wares thy wonders be,
Hence, flattering Imp! No love for me!

A SONG

I know it will not ease the smart;
  I know it will increase the pain;
'Tis torture to a wounded heart,
  But oh! to see him once again.

Though other lips be pressed to his,
  And other arms about him twine,
And though another reign in bliss
  In that true heart that once was mine;

Yet oh! I cry it in my grief;
  I cry it blindly in my pain;
I know it will not bring relief,
  But oh! to see him once again.

LOVE AND LAUGHTER

In the days when earth was young,
  Love and laughter roamed together:
Love took up his harp and sung,
  Round him all was golden weather.
But there came a sigh anon:
What will be when Life is gone?

Laughter then would try his skill,
  Sang of mirth and joy undying:
But he played his part so ill,
  He set Echo all a-sighing.
Ever came an undertone—
What will be when Life is done?

Then for ever, since that time,
  Love no more can live with Laughter:
For, bright as is the Summer-prime,
  Winter pale will follow after.
Love henceforth must dwell with Sighs:
Joy was left in Paradise.

SUNT LACRYMAE

O SADDEST of all sounds that be,
Sweet Virgil's sad 'Sunt lacrymae.'
A jewelled thought, a gracious line
Set in a music half-divine;
With murmur like the enchanted sea
About his own Parthenope:
Where at the last, sad Ocean's lover,
He rests, a laurel hanging over!

And he had heard it, he had known
Humanity's sad, silent moan;
And felt the waste of human things
That mounts from beggars up to kings;
A young Marcellus, early taken,
Like fruit in spring-time tempest-shaken;
Or great Catullus' starry fame
That sunk, and left but half a name;
Or, rapture of a night, the bride,
Like Psyche, stolen from our side;
Or perished worth, and friendship old,
In dust and darkness lying cold.

And we have heard it, we have known
Yet deeper sorrow's sadder tone;
Beethoven's passion, Shelley's pain,
The splendid gloom of Byron's strain;
With Misereres of a song
Complaining to the years, how long
This heirloom of an ancient wrong?
And we have heard the pillow-cry
Of strong men's sleepless agony,
O God! How slow the hours go by!

But song more sweet shall never twine
The rue and rose in one short line;
Or more pathetic give to grief
An outlet, for a moment brief,
To loose awhile the captive woe
Whose prisoned drops refuse to flow;
And, like a draught of myrrh in wine,
To mix in tears an anodyne;
Than in, that world's epitome,
Sad Virgil's sweet 'Sunt lacrymae.'

EXCALIBUR

(On reading Tennyson's life.)

Oh for the old Excalibur! again
To see its lightning, see the king of men
Wave it before us, as he waved it then!

As he rode forth, the master-king of song,
To stay the evil, and to right the wrong,
And dead things blossomed as he went along,

Leading the battle. And they whose faith was dim
Felt a new spirit, strength in every limb,
And stars, all in their courses, fought for him.

But it is gone. Low-lying in the wave
It sleeps, Excalibur: about it rave
Tempests: the deep, dark waters are its grave.

Ah me, to see again that wondrous hilt,
As he rode forth in spur and armour gilt,
To banish wars, or in the tourney tilt!

When as a clarion loud his challenge rung,
And a great hope burned in us as he sung,
And young and old saw visions: all were young.

Ah me, to drink again, as generous wine,
That full rich voice; and hear his sounding line
Vibrate, and charm, with music all-divine!

While, as a benediction gladness-rife,
He pointed peace the crowning end of strife,
And Love, not Fate, the arbiter of life.

Oh for Excalibur! the poet's dream,
The magic sword, the glamour and the gleam
Lost in the waters, lost in life's dark stream!

Both, both are gone. We ne'er shall see again
The old Excalibur, or the king of men:
The world is old: things are not now as then.

TOUJOURS DE L'AUDACE

ONCE in our lives we know what men we are :
In common hours we live as common men,
Our valour not true valour; and a star
Shines not more distant than our Now and Then.
Anon, as winds that shake a stagnant deep,
Comes there a wakening. On some glorious day
Dull custom drops from off us like a sleep ;
And fear, a horrid nightmare, slinks away :
And we are free, and freedom is a power
Of joy, of inspiration. Only dare,
Dare strongly! When it comes, the day, the hour,
Delay not! Coming dangers throng the air :
Before us lie the paths of light or gloom,
A greater England, or decay and doom.

R. L. STEVENSON'S LAST WISH

Bury me on the height, love, bury me on the height,
The last to hold the parting day, the first to catch the light!
Bury me looking homeward, my feet toward the sea!
For Scotland and the rushing waves were all the world to me.
There are no hearts like Scotland's, so tender and so brave,
But Scotland is for living men, Samoa for a grave.
Bury me in the sunshine! I used to love of old
The freezing of the wintry stars, but now my blood is cold.
Bury me far from cities, the wrestling and the strife!
Beyond the span of working-years I do not care for life.
Only while I can wield a pen, fain would I live so long;
But death is for the weary, love, life only for the strong.
And though in death, yet—deathless tomb, whose hold no time can sever—
Bury me in the hearts of men, a grave to last for ever!

AFTER CATULLUS

Let us begone! Our hearts are chilled with winter:
Time has been busy, stolen our best away:
Fruit cannot blossom where no sap can enter:
Let us begone! We cannot sing to-day.

Let us begone! You never loved the Forum,
Nor I, dear friend; too pinched and poor its cries:
Not ours to sit on Boards, or make a Quorum:
We loved the woods, the winds, the larger skies.

Let us begone! Far off in summer lying,
Sirmio is bright, Friuli's hills are blue:
From Apennine to Alp soft clouds are flying:
Suns redden flowers; why not our old blood too?

Then, where the last ray still on Etna lingers,
Near to the last scene of Athenian woe,
There let us weave a crown with agèd fingers,
A cypress-crown to death! Come, let us go.

A 'PARSON'S PLEASURE'-GROUND

I HAVE a garden filled with sound
Of thrushes; paths that circle round;
And one straight walk more sweetly set
With lavender and mignonette,
Sweet herbs of grace, whose scent lives on
Like virtue, after life is gone;
My sanctuary! for so I call
That long straight path beneath the wall.

There do I muse,—how Nature's self
Moves upward; how, from shelf to shelf
Ennobled, through perpetual strife
She issues to a grander life.
And as I think how one small bud
Engrafted tames the wildest wood,
Sweet fruitage for man's use to bear,
And of its sweetness leave an heir;
Seems it—ah, may my faith be true—
Grace has its power in Nature too.
'Tis grace that lurks in kindly soil;
'Tis grace attends the tiller's toil;
Grace works in every flower that blows;
And in each briar there lives a rose.

Thus as I ponder, lo! a knell
Comes o'er me: 'tis the passing-bell.
Then think I of—beneath the sod—
Those sleeping: Are they all with God?
That one so wilful? This who died
In passion's youth unsanctified?
Can God accept them? Can He prove,
To those who loved not, God of Love?
I know not. But beneath this wall,
Hearing the glad-voiced thrushes call;
On my straight path so sweetly set
With lavender and mignonette;
I think, if we poor men below
Can of such wildness beauty grow,
Sure, He hath better means to try,
That mightier Gardener in the sky;
Who, while brief life our work doth end,
Hath all of Time His work to mend;
Unnumbered worlds beyond our ken;
Fresh soil for souls, fresh chance for men;
Angels of love to graft His grace;
Perchance, O heaven! to see His face.

And then I thought—as in the trees
Life murmured with the quickening breeze—
Sadly I thought; not they alone
Were sinners; half the sin my own.
Had I more faithful preached the word,
Perchance they might have better heard;
Have risen on wings, and, out of clay
Uplifted, soared to heavenly day.
So trust I, God will not condemn
Those who not Him, but man contemn.

HODGE: 'THE NATERAL MAN'

It's nateral to wish for land in them as 'asn't any;
It's nateral to think a pound is 'appier nor a penny;
It's nateral to try and get, and gettin' not to lose it,
An' mighty nateral 'avin' got for your own good to use it.

It's nateral for them who's up to kip down them that's under:
How cum that other way about 'as ollers been my wonder;
That other way of lyin' down for others to pass over,
Like openin' gates for nayburs' cows to cum an' eat yur clover.

Yer tork of kindness, love an' all: it sounds that mighty grand;
I knock a thistle on the 'ead when I've a stick in 'and;
Yer like to see another's crop as blooms when yur's is blited;
I doant care who is't suffers 'rong as long as I am rited.

Yer say, I shud to others do, as I wud be done by;
Well, zur, if yer've a nag to sell, 'ere's wun as wants to buy!

Tell me 'is tricks, 'is age, an' wind, an' why 'is legs is swellin';
If 'e's the 'oss yer say 'e is, then, man, why are ye sellin'?

No, zur, down 'ere in Hagglinton we counts an 'onest man
Is wun as ollers gets the most, an' gives the least he can:
He'll swet an' haggle, sware 'e won't, brake off, and go 'is way;
But giv'n 'is 'and, an' sed 'is wurd, he'll never brake 'is say.

Yer call me Hodge; my name is Jones: ther's Joneses by the score
In churchyard thare; they ollers ware a stiddy sort, an shure;
But yer've two things we 'avn't got, the money an' the gab;
Yer see, yer cum before us, zur, 'i the fine old game of grab.

It's our turn now. 'Tis well for you to tork o' men as brothers,
We'll do it too, as well as you, when we're atop of others;
But now I do as I'm dun by, with less o' sweet than sours:
I loves men—Wal, a little bit, an' out o' bizness 'ours.

IN MEMORIAM: TOM HUGHES

Close up, close up, as the ranks grow thin,
As the daylight deepens, the sun goes down;
Though faint and bleeding, too few to win,
We may help others to wear the crown.

Ah, fatal shot! Did ye mark that fall?
'Twas he, O brothers, strong heart, true brain;
And a splendid fighter; his breezy call
Rang forth, and the world grew young again;

With the boys at battle, the boys at play
In the old School-close, 'neath the old School-bell,
And the grand old Master, who led the fray,
With the earnest brow, and the sacred spell:

All fighters all—and there 's one more gone,
With his gallant bearing, his lofty crest;
And we must not stay, for the fight goes on;
This world for fighting, the next for rest!

So just one look as we pass him by!
And just one tear as we turn the sod!
And a star the less in a darkened sky!
And a prayer as we leave his soul with God!

Then close up closer! Yet nearer stand,
As in those schooldays that he loved so well,
And fill up the gap, a united band,
And step in the place where a comrade fell!

And onward still with your faces set
To the sunbright thought of an earlier day!
For a soul is alive in the old world yet,
And a spirit astir in its bonds of clay.

And all together! Ye shall not fail—
To doubt were coward, to halt were crime—
With God and with man to uplift the veil,
And win out light from the glooms of time.

THE NEW PRIMATE, 1896

Age as of granite, with a heart of fire:
Nerve as of iron, strength that cannot tire:
Hard on himself, to others bluff and bold,
The great dear master that we loved of old!
Now with a gesture strong and massive phrase,
Like to a boulder of primaeval days,
Unpolished, rude, the ponderous sentence rolls,
To lie unmoved, a landmark in our souls,
Low in the valley, telling whence it came,
The winter's ravage on the rocks of flame!

Such is his common talk; on themes more high
He softens, melts; a tear is in his eye;
Till as it falls, and wets his rugged cheek,
His voice grows stern; you shall not think him weak,
But with himself at war; the only foe
He dreads, the fire that throbs too fierce below.

Only at times, of Christmas, Easter-day,
He breaks all bounds, he casts the curb away;
Flings off restraint, and counting not the cost,
Fights for his Lord, a soldier at his post;
His Master, as he calls him: tremblingly
The word falls from him with a yearning cry.

Then, as they hear, the idlers, old and young,
Arrested stop, and from an old man's tongue,
Catching his fire, forget their dreary cries
Of languor born, their cobweb sophistries;
Kindle and glow; and, as the trumpet rings,
Drink deep, athirst, his rage for better things;
Gird up their feeble loins, and, self forgot,
Find a new pastime in the toiler's lot;
And in the touch of hearts an inborn spell,
To bring back Christ on earth, in hearts to dwell.

Such is his power. O Thou that guidest all,
Grant him to give, and us to hear the call,
The leader's rallying signal; and through lands
Of sea-spread England knit concordant bands!
At home a steadfast strength, a dauntless power
Wisely to stem the madness of the hour:
With justice as the light transparent, free,
And patience like a slowly-sapping sea,
Preaching to wayward hearts, too fain to roam,
Brotherhood, union, purity, and home.

OXFORD

O Holy Land to which I longed to go,
Long, long ago!
On Israel's stony mountains there to trace
The prints of Grace;
From Hebron's starting-point each rock to see
Where holy footsteps trod and bled for me,
On to the shades of dark Gethsemane,
And darker Golgotha—
I could not go;
Visions there are of mingled joy and woe,
That haunt our dreams, unrealized below.
Yet oft I think amid these sacred walls,
And solemn calls—
These airy pinnacles entranced in light,
These bells that warn of Time's eternal flight,
These moonlit, soul-lit, high-ascended spires,
That take first morning-rays, eve's latest fires—
May there not be
For such as me
Places of memory, hallowed, old, divine,
Where one may ope a door, and find a shrine,
Or climb a tower, and see an Eden shine?

Places of beauty so unearthly fair,
That, best-beloved, our Holy Land is there,
Mid our own people? there, in mist and rime,
And tenderest fancy, mystic veil of time;
There in the home of saints, whose old-world fire
Lives on to light and kindle young desire,
While still-expanding truth new vesture wears,
Fresh revelations with advance of years;
There, where we hear the highest, holiest call,
There is the land most holy, after all.

THE SAME

(From a dream to a dream.)

Once as it lay before me,
A city of faery gleam,
My spirit went forth to seek it,
To know it, and clasp—a dream.

And then as I felt more nearly
Its glory, its need, its shame,
And came to love it more dearly,
It was ever at heart the same:

The home of a great ideal;
A music no ear had heard;
A vision, eye had not seen it;
To the tongue 'twas an unknown word.

While longings of inward beauty,
That spoke in a prayer, a sigh,
Still haunted its ancient churches,
Still lit up its low-roofed sky.

And a thousand passions were burning
'Neath the crust of an icebound stream;
And a thousand spirits were yearning
In that city of glow and gleam.

But the old, they had never found it;
And the young, they are seeking still;
And it seems, like a fading sunset,
To vanish behind the hill.

And 'twill never be found, that secret,
Except as in years gone by,
By losing a life to save it,
By living as though we die;

By seeing a light unearthly
Illumining page and pen;
By living a life of vision
Along with the life of men.

So in moonlit College and cloister,
While hearing the organ's swell,
And drinking its sweet-voiced music,
We find out a God as well;

Like him who sat at his tent-door,
And mused at the close of day,
Who found that in guise of strangers
Three angels had passed his way.

And now, as I ponder over
The past with its joy and pain,
It seems—O my friend, O Oxford—
All sinks into dream again.

OXFORD TO LONDON

O Friend, who, labouring for the State,
With sittings early, sittings late,
  Dost gnaw thy soul with righteous anger
At party violence, party hate:

To see our Senate's old renown
'Mid faction's darkening surges drown,
  And many a name of purer splendour
Setting, and like a star go down:

To hear the howl, the hiss, the cry,
The blatant taunt, the bandied lie,
  Where, saved through laws that guarded order,
The friends of anarchy law defy.

To long—and scarce to deem it sin—
To see some Cromwell enter in,
  And, England's mandate stern behind him,
For freedom's honour end discord's din.

Then come and quit the heated hall,
The strife, the mock division's call,
  Come, and amid old friends at Oxford,
In peace and beauty, forget it all!

Come, and where breaks a softer ray
On walls with centuries sere and grey,
'Mid memories old as Saxon Alfred,
Refresh your heart with the heart of May!

In meads where couch the slumberous kine
With kingcup and with cowslip fine,
By many a College ivy-mantled,
Trellised with rose and eglantine:

Or lawns like emerald velvet laid
'Mid whispering cloisters' dim arcade;
And walks by student-dreamer trodden
Leafy and cool in their elm-trees' shade:

Or, sweeter still, arched boughs between,
To trace the twilight-glimmering scene,
The ghost-like city, steeple-studded,
Slumbering grey in a mist of green:

Or listen while the throstle sings
Night's requiem, where, yet adding rings,
Millennial oaks bemock the aloe,
That once a century skyward springs:

Or follow, still by fancy led,
Where bells are ringing overhead;
Bells with their ceaseless chime in Oxford,
Voices to warn from the peaceful dead.

Or wander down an ancient street
Where mingling ages quaintly meet,
Pillar and pediment, dome and gable,
Mellowed by time to a picture sweet.

Or sit where saints have sat, and feel
Their calm across our spirits steal,
  Their singleness, their depth of purpose:
Our lives seem shallower as we kneel.

Or stand in many a noble hall,
Where England's greatest deck the wall,
  Prelate and statesman, prince and poet;
Who hath an ear, let him hear their call!

Or pace, remote from noisier throng,
Some shadowy corridor along,
  And tread on tombs, and waken echoes,
That bid the living be true and strong.

Or take the oar, and down the stream,
Silently floating like a dream,
  People the wave with phantom races,
And hear the shout for the victor-team:

Thoughts of a past, a happier time,
When selfish aim seemed public crime,
  And feel once more the pulses quicken
With generous heat of a genial prime.

Then, back returning, seek once more
The Babel city, the wordy war;
  Perchance a drooping cause to hearten,
Perchance its wavering ranks restore.

For still, though doubtful seems the fray,
And long the struggle and hard the way,
  Yet lawless passion is self-destroying,
And coolness, courage, shall win the day.

1886.

TWO LONG VACATIONS

(GRASMERE)

SEVEN we were, and two are gone:
Two! What are those remaining?
Ghosts of the past, with cloud o'ercast,
Cloud that is always raining!

Ah me! Last year, when I came back,
Like faithful hound returning,
For old sake's sake to each loved track,
With heart and memory burning;

There was the knoll, there was the road,
There was our humble dwelling;
There o'er the Raise of Dunmail showed
The shoulder of Helvellyn.

And there the great heights black with cloud,
Whence flowed the white stream under;
And glens with echoing torrent loud,
And cataracts' distant thunder.

And seven men's eyes looked dimly out
Beneath our old house-rafter;
And seven men's forms crept round about
With peals of ghostly laughter.

And sad yews dripped on the mossy stone,
  And fuchsia and rose grew rank;
And woodbines wept as the rain poured on,
  And the fern spread over the bank.

And trees o'ergrown shut out the light
  Of Easedale's cascade falling;
And hearing, after-born of sight,
  No longer heard it calling.

And no one cared: save only there
  Where flowers make silence sweet,
By pilgrims worn, that rocky stair!
  Look up! 'Tis Wordsworth's seat;

Where glassed in those far-reaching eyes
  He read all nature plain;
And saw more things in earth and skies
  Than will ever be seen again.

There found he wealth, to others dearth,
  And peace from men's wild din;
And, would we know the soul of earth,
  He bade us look within.

All else is changed. Yet rain may pour,
  Weeds spread, and all grow rotten;
Yet something lives from days of yore,
  Still fresh, still unforgotten.

The lamp of truth we lit in youth,
  The dreams of life's young morning:
In that dark hour I found their power,
  Still in the embers burning.

O vows, I cried, so oft denied,
And you resolves forsaken,
Befriend me still! A new-born will
Trusts in you newly taken.

But, how to live, oh, tell me, friend,
In age still wisdom gaining?
The clouds descend; ah, bid them blend
With fires of youth remaining!

A RUINED COTTAGE IN THE HIGHLANDS

('Exsilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant.')

THE beam says to the rafter, We are crazy and old:
The hearth says to the chimney, We are blackened and cold:
The door says to the window, We shut not out the rain:
And the whole place is accursed, it reeks of wrong and pain.

Yet the burn flows on the mountain, still limpid and fleet:
And the wind sings in the fir-tree, with song still as sweet:
And the grouse crows on the hill-top, the first to greet the day:
And the deer strays in the forest, with its young one at play.

But where now is the tartan, with the clansman of old,
Who stalked once in Lochaver, with step free and bold?
He is lord now of a prairie, he cannot count his sheep,
But his heart still is Lochaver's; he returns there in sleep.

Then his foot brushes the heather, where it purples
the moor,
With the light heart of the hunter, in the chase as
of yore;
With the proud step of his fathers, as he roams o'er
hill and glen;
O fair mother of heroes, who shall match thee for men?

They have wrung wealth in Iowa, with the steam-
horse and plough:
They have crushed gold in Alaska, with the sweat of
their brow:
But the true wealth of a people is the home with its
loves and tears,
Where the dead lie, and the heart lives, by the tombs
of a thousand years.

Then roll, waters of Yukon, your reefs rich in gold!
Grow white, greenest of prairies, with fleeces untold!
But his heart still is Lochaver's, in the cot with the
'but and ben';
They have deer still in Lochaver, but—where are the
men?

They were torn up from the shieling that cradled
their birth:
They were chased forth into exile, as strangers on
earth:
Oh, how shall they sing the old songs they learnt
when the heart was young,
When the minstrel spirit is broken, and the harp is
all unstrung?

There are snowpeaks in the Far West, sierras that cut the sky;
Like the white clouds of the summer that dazzle the eagle's eye:
But it's oh! for the hills of Scotland, for the mist, and glow, and gloom,
And the far cry of the curlew, and the heather in bloom!

'EASY DOES IT'

Do not hurry, do not flurry!
Nothing good is got by worry;
Bide the hour to make the spring!
Take life easy, that's the thing.

Do not trouble, do not trouble,
Heavy hearts make toiling double;
Groans the back with loaded pain?
Laugh, and 'twill grow light again.

Do not sorrow, do not sorrow!
Grief to-day is joy to-morrow;
Life flows smoothest after fears;
Eyes shine brightest washed with tears.

Hark the children, hark the voices!
Somewhere everything rejoices;
Blasts without of winter ring,
Yet inward mirth makes endless spring.

Soon from elms will rooks be cawing,
Young lambs leaping, old folk thawing;
Soon, with a sunny April dawn,
Will daisies bright bedeck the lawn.

Forward then to victory straining,
Forward as brave men uncomplaining;
Though cloud and tempest wrap the sky,
Yet wakes behind the Eternal eye,

Watching, wondering, yearning, knowing
Whence the stream and where 'tis going:
Seems all mystery? By-and-by
He will speak, and tell us Why.

A PAINTER TO A FLOWER

Little flower that lookst on me
So tenderly, so pleadingly;
As if thou on earth wouldst stay
Longer than a fleeting day;
Have thou thy wish! If aught can give
My canvas and my colour—live!

Yet, to live! If what it asketh
Thou couldst know, and how it tasketh;
All the burden, all the grieving,
All the penalty of living;
Little flower, I think that thou
Wouldst wish to die, as thou dost now.

LABUNTUR ANNI

In the old year's distance, I remember well,
How a passing shadow came with a passing bell;
Elder generations passing swift away—
Yet the shadow came and went: youth again was gay.

In the midway distance, I remember well,
De per sunk the shadow then with the passing bell;
Warrior, statesman, poet, priest, mighty in their day,
All our manhood mourning wept, when they passed away.

Now there is no distance more, near the goal at last;
Time has nothing left to give; all is of the past:
Father, mother, sister, brother, none are left behind;
Only in the old tree still sings the old sea-wind:

Sings as in those distant years, long, long ago,
Cradle-song of childhood once, age's death-song now;
Sings with moanings manifold, the wonders of the sea,
Peril, loss, adventure, hope, and a better Hope to be.

A ROBIN

WHAT art thou doing there,
  Robin, sweet Robin;
On yonder bough so bare
  Singing, or sobbing?

Through the long summer-days,
  Heard wert thou rarely;
Lark, thrush, and nightingale
  Outsung thee fairly.

Now when lark, thrush, and all
  Silence are keeping;
Skies like a leaden pall,
  Mist undercreeping;

Where the dark yew its shade
  Over churchyards is flinging,
Thou sittest and singest—
  Oh! what art thou singing?

It is not of love;
  Love needs one to hear it:
It is not of life;
  Death and tombs are too near it.

And it is not in hope,
  With the long days before us,
With the limitless scope,
  And the woods sweet in chorus.

But when all else is still,
  And winds only are sighing,
Leaves falling around thee
  Decaying and dying;

When some fire yet unknown
  In thy warm heart is throbbing,
Thou sittest and singest there,
  Robin, sweet Robin.

Gay of heart, cheerily,
  Chiding our sadness;
But oh! there are tears in thee,
  Bird, in thy gladness.

PEACE

Winds and wild waves in headlong huge commotion
Scud, dark with tempest, o'er the Atlantic's breast;
While, underneath, few fathoms deep in ocean,
Lie peace and rest.

Storms in mid-air, the rack before them sweeping,
Hurry and hiss, like demons hate-possessed;
While, over all, white cloudlets pure are sleeping
In peace, in rest.

Heart, O wild heart, why, in the storm-world ranging,
Flit'st thou thus midway, passion's slave and jest,
When, all so near, below, above, unchanging
Are heaven, and rest?

RECOLLECTIONS

How nice the old days were,
When you and I together
Went nutting in the autumn woods,
And all was golden weather!
The squirrel peeped, the squirrel leaped,
Through leaves just turning yellow;
He seemed to grin like harlequin,
He was a merry fellow.

How nice the old days were,
When Christmas came returning;
The games we played, the forfeits paid,
The snapdragons set burning;
And on the sly, when you and I
Talked what we would do one day,
And what a horrid thing it was,
When Christmas fell on Sunday.

How nice the springtimes were,
When days were longer growing!
We knew each nook of sunniest look,
Where primroses were blowing;

And, happiest hour of all the year,
  Spring's fuller bloom installing,
The hour that brought the swallow back,
  And set the cuckoo calling!

And summer, too, with leafy June,
  With haytime in the meadows;
With corncrake jarring to the moon,
  And moonbeams chasing shadows!
Each butterfly, each song of bird,
  We loved them—none was stranger;
And when the snake the tall grass stirred
  We shrank, but loved the danger.

Too good to last! I went to school;
  With mutual tears we parted;
You seemed to grieve, or make-believe,
  Neither was broken-hearted.
Time flew apace, I homeward came,
  A bird of prouder feather;
We could no longer be the same
  As boy and girl together.

There was a bar we could not break,
  But still when eve is falling,
When spring has brought the swallow back,
  And set the cuckoo calling,
I think how nice the old days were
  Of childish first affection,
And put to sleep each waking care
  With dreaming recollection.

THE OLD BOOKS

THE old books, the old books, the books of long ago!
Who ever felt Miss Austen tame, or called Sir Walter slow?
We did not care the worst to bare, of human sty or den;
We liked to love a little bit, and trust our fellow men.
The old books, the old books, as pure as summer breeze!
We read them under garden-boughs, by firelight on our knees;
They did not teach, they did not preach, nor scold us into good;
A noble spirit from them breathed; the rest was understood.
O happy dusk, when lamps were lit, around a mother's chair,
To listen as she read, and breathe the rich enchanted air,
Of banner bright, and spotless knight, of eerie elfin page,
With all that glamour of delight, that wondrous Middle Age.

Then was there no forbidden tree, with longing vainly eyed;
No hiding books with lock and key, to childish ears denied;
The library was open field, where all might come and go;
The serpent had not yet revealed his heritage of woe.

The new books, the new books, the great neurotic school!
That never let the Furies sleep, the fervid passions cool:
Be real! they cry, and lust and strife thick crowd the horrid stage;
And every loathsome ill of life is 'copy' to their page.
The new books, the new books, the other nobler kind!
Straight from the heart they come and speak, and round the heart they wind;
Marcella in her lovelier mood, a Stevenson, a Thrums,
A Kipling great in camp and wood, a Besant in the slums.
Not theirs to hint that all is dark, the sun has fled the day;
Not theirs to stamp the fallen leaf more deeply in the clay!
In every life they find a strain of good as yet untold;
In simple hearts, a noble vein of unsuspected gold:
They hold the mirror to our times, they paint in motley dyes
The image of our wants and crimes; they bid us sympathize.

And not in vain : so rich the art, so rare the painter's skill,
They wake in every sleeping heart the old knight-errant still.

But the old books, the old books, the mother loves them best;
They leave no bitter taste behind to haunt the youthful breast :
They bid us hope, they bid us fill our hearts with visions fair;
They do not paralyze the will with problems of despair.
And as they lift from sloth and sense to follow loftier pains;
And stir the blood of indolence to bubble in the veins;
Inheritors of mighty things, who own a lineage high,
We feel within us budding wings that long to reach the sky;
To rise above the commonplace, and through the cloud to soar,
And join the loftier company of grander souls of yore;
Then as she reads each magic scene, the firelight burning low,
How flush the cheeks! how quick, how keen, the heart-beats come and go!
The mother's voice is soft and sweet, the mother's look is kind,
But she has tones that cause to beat all passions of the mind :
And Alice weeps, and Jack inspired, rides forth a hero bold;
So master passions, early fired, burn on when life is cold.

LOVE AND LEARNING

Weep ye, all of learned men,
For a master of the pen,
Passed beyond our mortal ken!

Weep him, weep the exalted soul,
Gathering from the ages' roll
Learning's tribute, tax and toll,

To devote, an offering meet,
Holiest incense, perfume sweet,
For his Lord, his dear Lord's feet.

So he taught us, master, friend;
Love it seemed, without an end,
Nothing on himself to spend;

All for others, rich and poor!
All! his love's exceeding store
Would not close the Church's door,

Rather spread it wider. Clear
This at least, that man is dear,
Truth is large, and God is near.

Weightiest voice in Church and School;
Weightiest tongue to awe the fool;
Weightiest voice, but gentlest rule.

How shall we replace him? Gone,
Say we by his funeral stone,
Gone, and we are left alone!

Ah, these students! Brief their fate,
Crushed beneath the double weight;
Love and learning's heavy freight!

Brilliant thus the life, but soon
Burning out like Tropic noon;
While the colder Arctic moon,

Where the pallid icebergs throng,
Sways its night of winter long,
Chill of death, but, death-like, strong.

Martyr-students! See, they go
One by one, and in our woe
Friendless are we left below.

Double burden cannot stay:
Yet, resolved, they seem to say,
'Better thus to burn away,

Than as leaves to fade and fall,
Mouldering by some churchyard wall,
Lingering leaves at winter's call,

Mouldering on oblivion's sod!
Quick then, brothers, where they trod,
Upward! Lo, it leads to God!'

LOVE AND NATURE

O ye birds there, our sweetest in singing,
  Did ye learn your glad music of streams?
From yon fountain melodiously springing,
  Like a sleeper awakened from dreams?

Hark, that bell-note! How sweetly it tinkled
  Over ledges, through mosses and fern!
As ye bathed there at noon, dew-besprinkled,
  Did the first bird its first note there learn?

And the winds, now in autumn-leaves moaning,
  Now joyous and gay after rain,
Did ye hear them, your answer intoning
  With a sadder or gayer refrain?

And the storms, were they also your teachers?
  Say, eagle, dread monarch on high,
Lord of air and of all feathered creatures,
  Came it thence, thine unearthly shrill cry?

Was it thus, now such melodies pouring,
  That ye learnt your first lesson, sweet birds?
E'en as eloquence, high in its soaring,
  Was content first to stammer in words?

Till the nightingale, all art combining,
Song of thrush, and of warbler, oft told,
Came last, like a Homer refining
Rude lays to an epic of gold?

Ah, not thus, was the answer replying
From a songster, the sage of the grove;
Not from wind, stream, or fountain outlying,
But within us the teacher, from love!

Love, it may be, the picker, the chooser,
Nature's sweetest sounds apt to recall;
Love, it may be, the borrower, the user;
But 'twas love at the source, after all.

Love, a joy, and a bliss, and a yearning,
Love, a pang, and a pain of desire;
Ask yon lark there, whose rapture is burning
In the firmament, catching its fire!

Ask the skylark, our wonder, our glory,
As he sings from his honest, sweet breast,
Though a world may be listening, his story
To his little brown mate in the nest!

And the love-song, the love-note, the warning,
When the hawk is abroad in the sky,
Are the offspring of love; they are born in
Love's heart, and without love they die.

For a thousand sweet notes may be ringing,
Heard nature's rude harpstrings along,
But the charm of them all is the singing,
And the heart is the charm of the song.

And would ye too, our singers, not perish,
But live on, to sound through the years,
Know, 'tis nature alone we most cherish,
Made human through joy and through tears.

For a thousand bright thoughts may be winging
Love's fairy-sweet fancies along;
But, as pearls to enchain us need stringing,
So love, to enthrall us, needs Song.

QUIS DESIDERIO—

TENNYSON.

BUT yesterday there was a hand
That touched the harp with high command;
From first to last its faultless strain
Was resolutely clear and sane;
No breath unholy swept the strings;
No storm of passion soiled the springs;
Even in its strongest, swiftest roll
'Twas subject still to self-control;
As through its banks it poured along
No torrent, but a tide of song;
Full, liquid, deep, majestic sound,
That felt its purpose, knew its bound;
With stately music, sovereign tone,
And sweetness, wisdom, all its own.

Who did not love him? Tearful eyes
Behold, long-watched, the curtain rise,
And see, clear-limned, that all may read
His picture. 'Tis the man indeed:

The soaring brow, the lofty grace,
The dark-lined visionary face,
That hid a nature ardent, strong,
And generous, loth to think a wrong
Of any: since the world began
There breathed not truer gentleman.

Then as we muse, with wonder filled,
Of all he fired, and all he thrilled;
Now singing in his lyric moods,
The Ariel of our summer woods,
Of grove, and stream, and meads, and flowers—
He loved them, they were England's, ours—
How true his touch, how fine, how sweet!
Earth seemed to blossom at his feet.

Anon, in high heroic rhyme
He rose, he took the wings of Time;
With Homer leaving worlds of sight
For inward vision, clearer light.
There, as a half-illumined moon,
Part hidden, part in cloudless noon,
He sang of shadows; names forgot
Of Lyonesse, and Camelot;
And Arthur, and the knightly ring
That gathered round the blameless King;
With Launcelot of the matchless spear;
And lovely, guilty Guinevere:
Creatures of fancy, but his art
Gave them such substance, colour, heart,

That, as on all his glorious dream
There came a glamour and a gleam,
The Past was living: buried hours
Were with us; they too, England's, ours.

Yet grander still he struck a note—
And strung in heaven the chord he smote—
He taught us faith, he lightened tears,
He lifted veils of future years:
Till, saddening in their pride of gold,
And sickening of a heart grown cold,
Men turned to dream; and dreaming stood
To muse of love and brotherhood;
Not come as yet, but seen afar
Like advent of a later star,
To light a blot in darkened skies,
And close a doubt of aching eyes.
There was he loftiest: there his word
Like wonder-working prophet stirred;
And, as we marked him take his stand
With lonely, shadowy, pointing hand—
Beyond our Present, past our ken,—
To worlds that wait the future men;
Our toil seemed easier, life more dear,
Earth less a discord, heaven more near;
And things which had been passed away
In dawning of the Golden Day,
Lost, as in ocean rivers die,
In light of immortality.

Such was the man; the Poet-seer,
The knightly nature, both are here:

And these, embalmed to far-off days,
The amaranth in his crown of praise,
Shall live to tell, if men forget,
His greatness, rarer, lovelier yet
Than all earth's laurels. This our king
Of song was yet a loftier thing;
Amid a world of spot and stain
His life was noble as his strain.

THE LOST CAUSE

[After Browning.]

'Da nobis veniam, Poeta magne;
A te, non tua, possumus furari.'

Lost, did they say of it, lost for one failure?
Lost, that a leader, a banner went down?
Nay, 'tis not always things most that prevail here
Live most hereafter with longest renown.

Oh, how we loved it, would live for it, die for it,
Give it our best—life, blood, treasure, and all!
Is it our best thus to sit here and sigh for it,
Stir to no summons, awake to no call?

Holiest of causes, how grand then it seemed to us:
Little we said, but light shone in our eyes:
Little we said, but a great hope then beamed to us,
Clouds, were there any, ne'er darkened our skies.

So we marched onward, God with us advancing,
Youth swelling our legions, hope mocking despair;
He at our head with his bright eye far-glancing,
Mountains seemed valleys, we trod upon air.

On, on we sped, we the heirs of the ages,
Born to set right old oppression and wrong,
Our day-dreams the visions of prophets and sages,
Their names on our banners, their watchwords our song.

What, then, has happened? We knew we had haters,
Knew some were weak in our motley array;
Failure, 'twas only to purge away traitors;
Danger, to drive the time-server away.

Nothing has happened. Say not, 'God is altered,
Freedom and justice no longer the same;'
Nay, comrades and brothers, 'tis we who have faltered,
Just for one failure to fling up the game.

Pick up the banner, then; on to the front there!
You, you, and you! What, ye scruple to die?
Think how he fought for us, bearing the brunt there,
Think how, when dying, he pointed on high!

God all his trust, not in numbers, majorities,—
'Count not the heads, so the hearts be but strong:
Men work with many, but God with minorities;
Soldiers of Gideon were lost in a throng.'

Only a remnant! Yet shoulder to shoulder
Close up, truer metal by suffering annealed;
Less gold-braid, less shouting, but sterner and older,
Resolved there to conquer, or die on the field!

Pick up the banner, nor think yet of resting;
Time then to rest when the struggle is done;
When the brow shall bear garlands, whose bosom bore testing,
And the last shall be first, and the lost shall be won.

AVE, ATQUE VALE!

Could we but fall as we begin to fade,
When winds blow chill!
Not withered hang to blot the happy shade,
Fall and lie still!
Could we but fall, after one short, sweet spell,
Of the glad sunshine that we loved so well;
Perchance from its warm gold to catch one streak
Of lingering lustre on our agèd cheek!
As Autumn for one moment backward turns,
Dreaming of Summer, and as Summer burns
With calm, soft airs, and smile familiar, kind
Yet sad, as knowing Winter lurks behind!

Could we so fall, and in some half-hid spot
Lie all unheeded, though not all forgot;
'Twere better so,
Than, with the first frost quivering, overhear
From the light passer-by the unkind sneer,
'Better have died than live on shrivelled, sere,
Long, long ago!'
Even as a guest, who knows how late to stay,
Pleasing and pleased; and with a word to say
To all, then with a smile to pass away,
Content to go.

Fresh is the time: new thoughts, new visions start;
The new guests coming bid the old depart;
Why should they stay, who know it all by heart,
Its joys who spurn?
Let them begone, and leave the world to those
Who find life lovelier than a newborn rose,
Who pant, who burn!
Why should they stay, who only seek repose
Cold in an urn?

ONLY A SONG

Song says not much, but says it, oh, so well!
We cannot tell
What is the meaning of its secret spell:
Its charm divine
Is like the murmur of a sounding shell,
Heard in the pauses of the ocean-swell,
In beauty's oft recurring parallel.
Its feeling line,
Artless of rule, yet more than rules of art,
Unconscious pierces, probes, with inward smart
The lover's breast, the patriot's swelling heart.
Its music fine
Is such, that if the singer break his song,
And stop, the very spheres seem all a-wrong;
We bid him take his lute, and sweet and strong
Renew his strain.
O singer, sing once more the old refrain!
And echo faint its burden still prolong
In memory's chain!
And, lest it perish, being only song,
Sing it again!
Again, again!

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